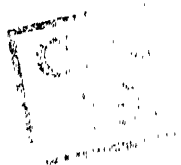




# MITHRAIC EMBLEMS





by the same author

*poems*

THE FLAMING TERRAPIN

THE WAYZGOOSE

ADAMASTOR

FLOWERING REEDS

THE GEORGIAD

.

*autobiography*

BROKEN RECORD



THIRTY numbered copies of this special edition have been printed on hand-made paper and signed by the author. Eight presentation copies have also been printed

*Roy Campbell. 18.*



ROY CAMPBELL

# MITHRAIC EMBLEMS

poems

*"... sin otra luz y guía  
sino la que en el corazón ardia."*

*"... Aunque es de noche."*

SAN JUAN DE LA CRUZ

BORISWOOD : LONDON

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To Mary Campbell



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I

# MITHRAIC EMBLEMS



## MITHRAIC EMBLEMS — a symbolic poem

*Vers lou mitan 'i 'n biòu, que vai lou pougne  
Au vèntre un escourpioun, un chin lou mordre  
Em' uno serp . . . qu'à si ped fai d'oundado.  
Lou brau, plus fort que tout, a tengu tèsto,  
Quand un jouvent enmantela d'ou ristre,  
Un fier jouvent, conifa de la boneto  
De liberta, iè tanco sa ligousso  
E lou coto. En dessus d'ou mourtolage  
Un courpatios esfraious voulastrejo.  
Devine lou quau pou, aquéu mistèri!*

MISTRAL



*The Altar*

MITHRAIC emblems wreathe the shrine  
whereon, like flower-fed bulls, are slain  
my years, exhaling in their pain  
the lily's ghost and bleeding wine;  
the trumpets of whose throats of gold  
cry pæan to the victor steel;  
whose souls in airy nimbus rolled  
deride the deaths to which they kneel;  
and from the sacred flames they feast  
in hymns of incense re-aspire  
to praise His throne of silver fire,  
Who all the leas with lilies fleeced  
to feed each great snow-shouldered beast  
in whom these squandered days expire.

*The Solar Enemy*

ENEMY of my inward night  
and victor of its bestial Signs  
whose arm against the Bull designs  
the red veronicas of light:  
your cape a roaring gale of gold  
in furious auroras swirled,  
the scarlet of its outward fold  
is of a dawn beyond the world—  
a sky of intellectual fire  
through which the stricken beast may view  
its final agony aspire  
to sun the broad æolian blue—  
my own lit heart, its rays of fire,  
the seven swords that run it through.

*Illumination*

I HALT and tremble at the height  
to which you lift my dreaming gaze  
through curls of fire, upon the white  
abrupt sierras of my days;  
O hyacinthal star! whose shining  
phasm to film, the flesh will glow  
a rose against the dawn, designing  
the skeleton, a frond of snow,  
while on the rosy splendour drawn,  
like webs of frost against the dawn,  
the nerves of joy and pain are spun  
fine as the thistled hair of fays  
and myriad as the coloured rays  
an eyelash fibres from the sun.

*The Seven Swords*

OF seven hues in white elision,  
the radii of your silver gyre,  
are the seven swords of vision  
that spoked the prophets' flaming tyre;  
their sistered stridences ignite  
the spectrum of the poets' lyre  
whose unison becomes a white  
revolving disc of stainless fire,  
and sights the eye of that sole star  
that, in the heavy clods we are,  
the kindred seeds of fire can spy,  
or, in the cold shell of the rock,  
the red yolk of the phoenix-cock  
whose feathers in the meteors fly.

*The First Sword*

THE first's of lunar crystal hewn,  
a woman's beauty, through whose snows  
the volted ecstasy outglows  
a dolphin dying in the noon;  
and fights for love, as that for life,  
and leaps and turns upon its side  
and swirls the anger of its strife  
a radiant iris far and wide,  
bronze, azure, and auroral rose  
faint-flushing through its nacreous snows —  
electric in a god's strong hand  
this sword was tempered in my blood  
when all its tides were at the flood  
and heroes fought upon the strand.

*The Second Sword*

CLEAR spirits of the waveless sea  
have steeped the second in their light,  
a low blue flame, the halcyon's flight  
passing at sunset swift and free  
along the miles of tunny-floats  
when the soft swell in slumber rolls  
and sways the lanterns on their poles  
and idly rocks the drifting boats;  
when evening strews the rosy fleccc  
and the low conches sound from far,  
a lonely bird whose sword of air  
is hilted with the evening star  
has slain upon the shrine of peace  
the daily slaving forms I wear.

*The Third Sword*

LIKE moonbeams on a wintry sea  
the third is sorrowful and pale  
and from my vision guards the grail  
whose glory I shall never see;  
a boreal streamer burning green,  
it shivers in a land of shade  
as if some wandering Cain had seen  
his soul reflected in its blade.  
It glitters in some frozen hold  
that leaves its icy hilt unthawn,  
its radius is a flame of cold,  
the skyline of an arctic dawn;  
Vulcan in forging it grew old  
and sorrow froze when it was drawn.

*The Fourth Sword*

IN crimson sash and golden vest  
a gay dædalion of the day  
transfixing with a sworded ray  
its black and melancholy breast,  
the tiger-fly with whirring vans  
rifles a sombre grape, whose heart,  
red-glowing to the hilted dart,  
seems a lit furnace that he fans—  
so to the soured and black despairs  
my blasted vine in autumn bears,  
so horneted with strident wings,  
to his own trumpet peal and drum  
the torcadoring sylph will come  
and anger is the sword he brings.

*The Fifth Sword**In memory of my Father*

SILENT and vertical and dim  
the lunar flambeau of a prayer  
that rising in the frosty air  
is silvered by the seraphim,  
thawing the night with airy blade,  
like a funereal candle set  
to burn the fuel of regret  
(though in the noon it casts a shade)  
the fifth, a lifetime to consume,  
in vigilance is still the same,  
a sword of silver in the gloom  
it guards a grief that is my shame;  
by day a cypress on a tomb,  
but in the night it is a flame.

*The Sixth Sword*

FROM that Toledo of the brain  
where none but perfect steel is wrought,  
of all its cities thronged with thought  
that soars the farthest from the plain,  
clear lightning with a sheath of gold,  
a scarlet tassel at the hilt,  
a blade the noonday sun to jilt  
and sparkle in a cherub's hold,  
forged only of the living rays  
of whom its lustre is the praise,  
the sixth salutes with lifted blade  
the passing oriflammes of days  
to whose white-mounted cavalcade  
the red blood drums the Marseillaise.

*The Seventh Sword*

THE seventh arms a god's desire  
who lusts, in Psyche, to possess  
his white reluctant pythoiness;  
as in the fugitive of fire,  
pale ice, the sworded flame is caught;  
or the red images of ire  
in the pure person of a thought.  
As arctic crystals that would shun,  
but each become, the living sun,  
where best his image may be sought;  
so to the shining sword he probes,  
her breasts are lighted, and their globes  
each to a vase of crystal wrought.

*The Raven*

THE flesh-devouring bird of time  
sails at their side; of his dark flight  
the streamers of immortal rhyme  
illumine the Scandinavian Night:  
all joys on which our lives are flown  
in those great wings of darkness flare—  
the blue flame that my lover's hair  
trawls like the moonrise on the Rhône:  
the red flame that the circling wine  
swivels around these sombre walls  
when friendship is the most divine  
and far too soon the morning falls—  
are fuel that his flight consumes  
to burnish those unageing plumes.

*The Raven*

UPON the red crag of my heart  
his gorgeous pinions came to rest  
where year by year with curious art  
he piles the faggots of his nest,  
old forest antlers lichen-hoary  
and driftwood fished from lunar seas  
that once had blossomed with the lory  
and trumpeted the golden bees:  
And steeper yet he stacks the pyre  
to tempt the forked, cremating fire  
to strike, to kindle, and consume:  
till answering beacons shall attest  
that fire is in the Raven's nest  
and resurrection in the tomb.

*The Raven's Nest*

HIS home of firewood from the skies  
reclaims the fire, a bride to house:  
dumb claws of thunderstricken boughs,  
that clenched in imprecation rise  
their scent and colour to implore  
as first from out the sun it came---  
and all that Burning can restore  
of sweated resins, leafing flame,  
of whistling tongues and scented air,  
in which the solar sprites arrive,  
the withered sticks become aware,  
and ancient skeletons revive.

*Death of the Bull*

THOSE horns, the envy of the moon,  
now, targeting the sun, have set:  
the eyes are cinders of regret  
that were the tinder of the noon.  
But from the hornèd Alp that kneels,  
as if the Rhône should sluice its flood,  
out of a Wound that never heals  
rills forth the lily-scented blood,  
the snow-fed wine of scarlet stain,  
that widens, flowering through the plains,  
and from the Wound its anguish drains—  
as you may hear from one who drank,  
down on his knees, beside the bank,  
and lost the memory of pain.

*The Snake, the Scorpion and the Dog*

NOW the slain victim to the sun  
would rise (his mortal ruin shed);  
his soul its base alloy to shun  
casts forth the parasites it fed;  
their ancient ruler to deride  
his earthly emanations spring  
like courtiers round a fallen king—  
his guile, a serpent at his side,  
with venom forks the mortal sting;  
the forceps fix his dangled stones  
as to the scorpion he atones  
that envy is a creeping thing;  
while at his shoulder tugs the beast  
he gorged the fattest at his feast.

*The Dawn*

TUG, monsters, at the badgered meat  
out of whose needs yourselves were born;  
into the east you tug the morn  
whose victory is your defeat;  
drink, thirsty swords, the central star—  
your cup of blood; your kiss of steel  
shall blaze the rising orb afar  
of which you twinkle in the wheel;  
and every drop that thence is wrung  
its parent circle shall repeat;  
a gem of humming rays, be hung  
like dew the rising god to greet,  
to turn the ancient valleys young  
and bathe His westward-wending feet.

*The Morning*

THE woods have caught the singing flame  
in live bouquets of loveliest hue—  
the scarlet fink, the chook, the sprew,  
that seem to call me by my name.  
Such friendship, understanding, truth,  
this morning from its Master took  
as if San Juan de la Cruz  
had written it in his own book,  
and went on reading it aloud  
until his voice was half the awe  
with which this loneliness is loud,  
and every word were what I saw  
live, shine, or suffer in that Ray  
whose only shadow is our day.

*San Juan Sings*

—AS if San Juan sang aloud  
until his song became whatever  
drew my sight: the sailing cloud:  
the Sea that rushes on forever,  
and the Sun that makes it proud:  
the blue wind tethered to the tree  
grazing the poppies by my side—  
the wind so blue you cannot see,  
so light and swift you cannot ride!  
the City White, above the air,  
(the City where I long to go)  
and the sunbeams playing there  
as windblown threads of golden hair  
are scattered on a nape of snow.

*The Meeting*

IT is too cheap to say 'delight'  
when speaking of so rare a thing—  
I met that Rider on the height  
who taught the morning cocks to sing.  
To me so humble (best of meetings!)  
he spoke—and visible the word!  
one wedded nimbus our two greetings  
that the frost made be seen as heard.  
As our two cigarettes their fumes,  
as our two horses snorted plumes,  
so mingled were the words we spoke:  
sufficed but greeting and good-bye  
down from the cheeks of Dawn to stroke  
and rosy feathers from the sky.

*Mithras Speaks*

‘A flitting rainbow in your life,  
your body but a passing cloud,  
remember this when you are proud  
or when you look upon a knife’.  
(He said) ‘We work for the same Boss  
though you are earth and I a star,  
and herdsmen both, though my guitar  
is strung to strum the world across!  
as if you’d known me all your life  
go with good luck as with a wife;  
though there’s a line you may not cross  
you will not find it in this land  
and you can sleep on this kaross’  
(He stroked the meadow with his hand).

*Mithras Speaks*

‘THE World put down its lovely mane,  
your fathers stroked it with their ships;  
they won you, with their guns and whips,  
the huge hosannah of the plain.  
Through the lush lilies as you crash  
and rein horizons in your hold,  
while, baying fire, the aloes slash  
your stirrups with their fangs of gold—  
Sing, Cowboy! string your strong guitar!  
For each Vaquero is a star  
and Abel’s sons the line will cross,  
under the stretched, terrific wings,  
the outspread arms (our soaring King’s)—  
the man they made an Albatross!’

#### AUTHOR'S NOTE

*IT is well known that many things in the Mithraic religion, even to the signing of the cross on the forehead, were as prophetic of the central and outstanding event in human history as the writings of Isaiah. Mithras has as much right therefore to Christian treatment as almost any other precursor, especially by a cowboy exercising his own profession. Mithras became the vassal of Christ, his cowboy in fact.*

*The quotation from Mistral refers to the bas relief at the Fontaine de Tourne.*



## The Sling

*To Uys Krige*

GUARDING the cattle on my native hill  
This was my talisman. Its charm was known  
High in the blue and aquiline ozone,  
And by my tireless armourer, the rill,  
Smoothing his pellets to my hand or eye:  
And how its meteors sang into the sky  
The eagles of the Berg remember still.

I wore this herdsman's bracelet all day long:  
To me it meant 'To-morrow' and 'Perhaps',  
The insults of Goliath, his collapse,  
Much fighting, and (who knows?) a life of song.  
So fine a jewel at his wrist to swing  
(For it was Chance) has seldom graced a king—  
As I have dangled on a rawhide thong.

It spelt me luck in every polished stone  
That to its mark, or thereabouts, had won:  
For it had been to a poor herdsman's son  
A stirrup once, to vault into a throne  
And ride a nation over its despair;  
To me, it seemed an amulet of prayer,  
Remembering David and the warrior Joan.

I thought of the incendiary hope  
Such herdsmen brought to cities from the hills,  
Taught by the rash example of the rills,  
Leaping in fire, to rush the headlong slope,  
To gather impetus for height that's lost,  
And hurtle through, regardless of the cost,  
Where cunning or precaution have no scope.

When I have felt the whiff of madness' wing,  
And rioted in barrios of shame,  
Where all they gave me was a thirsty flame,  
To burn my lips, that could no longer sing—  
Around my fevered pulse to cool the flame,  
There ghosted at my wrist an airy sling  
And drew me to a garden, or a spring.

My link, in its long absence, with delight:  
My handcuff (if I looked upon a knife)  
That chained me to the miracle of life  
Through a long frost and winter of the sprite:  
And ready, at most need, to arm my prayer,  
As once, when cries and feathers filled the air,  
It saved a silver egret from a kite.

When stranded on these unfamiliar feet  
Without a horse, and in the Stranger's land,

Like any tamest Redneck to your hand,  
I shuffled with the Charlies in the street  
Forgetting I was born a Centaur's foal;  
When like the rest, I would have sawn my soul  
Short at the waist, where man and mount should meet—

Its tightened thong would jerk me to control,  
And never let the solar memory set  
Of those blue highlands which are Eden yet  
For all the rage of dynamite or coal—  
Whose sunrise is the vision that I see then,  
That, hurled like Bruce's heart amongst the heathen,  
Leads on our White Commando to its goal!

Where none break ranks though down the whole race treks,  
It taught me how to separate, and choose;  
The uniform they ordered, to refuse—  
The hornrimmed eyes, the ringworm round their necks;  
And, when the Prince of herdsmen rode on high,  
To rope those hikers with that bolshie tie,  
To save my scruff, and see without the specs:—

Choosing my pebbles (to distinguish, free)  
I had dispensed with numbers; finding how,  
Since Space was always Here as Time was Now,  
Extent of either means a Fig to me;  
To the whole field I can prefer a flower

And know that States are foundered by an hour  
While centuries may groan to fell a tree.

By its cool guidance I unread my books  
And learned, in spite of theories and charts,  
Things have a nearer meaning to their looks  
Than to their dead analyses in parts;  
And how (for all the outfit be antique)  
Our light is in our heads; and we can seek  
The clearest information in our hearts.

It taught me to inflict or suffer pain:  
That my worst fortune was to serve me right,  
And though it be the fashion to complain,  
Self-pity is the ordure of the sprite,  
But faith its ichor; and though in my course,  
A rival knot the grass to spill my horse,  
That trusting all to luck is half the fight.

It taught me that the world is not for Use;  
But is, to each, the fruit of his desire,  
From whose superb Grenade to swill the juice,  
Some thaw its rosy frost into a fire—  
Leaving the husks they most expect to find  
To those insisting on the horny rind;  
For it rewards as we to it aspire.

So ripe a fruit, so ruddy, and so real!—  
To-night it bleeds, as when in days gone by  
(Aldebaran a rowel at my heel)  
I rounded up the cattle on the sky  
Against the Berg's Toledo-steeped walls—  
As now, upon the mesas of Castile  
Beside the city that it most recalls.

For him whose teeth can crack the bitter rind—  
Still to his past the future will reply,  
And build a sacred city in his mind  
With singing towers to thunder in the wind:  
To light his life will shine the herdsman King  
Who whirls our great Pomegranate in his sling  
To herd the other planets through the sky.

Slung at his wrist will hang the phantom stress  
Of David's stone—to weigh that all is right;  
Even to daunt him should the weak unite  
In one Goliath, he'll accept and bless,  
Whose home's the Earth, and Everywhere his bed  
A sheepskin saddle to his seat or head,  
And Here and Now his permanent address.

## The Crystal

To form the idiom of her flesh  
I faceted in clearest thought  
An arctic crystal in whose mesh  
Of frosty rays the sun is caught  
That from its central pulse of fire  
Vibrates the arrebol it stains,  
And forks the azure of her veins  
Through flushed auroras of desire.  
Though nerves of splendour lace the jewel,  
Though to my rasp its ice be fuel  
And bright within it burns the brands:  
I might have breathed upon a glass—  
To feel my purpose through it pass  
It runs like water through my hands.

## The Hat

BENEATH our feet we heard the soaring larks;  
The sunlight had the hum of winnowed chaff,  
And the blue wind was sown with tingling sparks,  
That blew my hat away to make you laugh.  
Over the land it sailed, collecting height,  
Flapped in the face of each offended crow,  
And scared the speckled falcon of the Baux,  
Adventurously taunting it to fight.  
Like Saturn's in its whirling shady brim,  
Far down, its giant shadow coursed the plain—  
Never did autogyre so lively skim  
As did the flying discus of my brain;  
And though my skull, a mile or so behind,  
Left to the cold phrenologizing wind,  
Shone bald and egg-like in the noonday sun—  
This fantasy was left to hatch alone,  
A sudden brainwave, cracking through the bone,  
That for a breathless minute made us one  
With that unsated wish in us, that lives  
Out of this merely positive degree  
In the wide region of superlatives,  
Translating every rash hyperbole  
We utter, into life and action there;

Out of our foibles founding pyramids;  
And friezing dizzy Parthenons of air  
With deeds that our heredity forbids.

## A Jug of Water

*To Armand Guibert*

THE snow-born sylph, her spools of glory spun,  
Forgets the singing journeys that she came  
To fill this frosty chrysalis of flame  
Where sleeps a golden echo of the Sun.

The silver life and swordplay of the noon  
Caught in mid-slash; the wildfire of the scar  
Whose suds of thunder in a crystal jar  
Compose a silent image of the moon.

Shut rainbow; hushed appeasement of the spray;  
Meeting of myriad dew, as if to show  
Aurora's hand from out whose cup of snow  
The solar horses drink the fires of day.

A masquer so anonymously white  
Who smiles without a face: a cloister frail  
In whose clear precinct music takes the veil  
And sings, but to the vision, with its light;—

It was the psalm and incense of the plain,  
The sheep-heard music humming on the roofs,  
The candle lighted by our horses' hoofs  
When we rode home by moonlight after rain.

When tinder to a star it lay at night  
Holding it like a glow-worm in its hand;  
On in a shallow ripple shaved the sand  
Filming a stormy shipwreck of the light—

Still was its only study to acquire  
Embryon ecstasies, the sperm of power—  
Rose of the dawn, or nimbus of the shower  
To sail, a ship of love, on seas of fire.

Its luck was always to sustain a King,  
The jingled spur and stirrup of the cloud—  
To launch a swan by the same art endowed  
Or smooth the pebbles for a David's sling.

True phoenix-fuel whom no burning mars  
But pain and fire resuscitate afresh  
It has put on all forms of flame or flesh  
And trawled the lovely bodies of the stars.

And once it was a youth before he died  
To form his lily-calyx for the light,  
Who made a pond his palace of delight  
And thought himself beside the sun enskied.

With stars and flying clouds about him rolled  
High in that silver paradise ensphered,

Down from his gaze his fatal beauty sheered  
A marble precipice with ferns of gold.

Echo his dirge, the zephyr is his shroud,  
Whose pride with running water was but one:  
And both a brief reflection of the sun  
Which any sigh suffices for a cloud.

Though every passing yearner for the skies  
Out of his glass construct a secret hell,  
If with our own reflections we must dwell  
Let them be seen in one another's eyes.

This crystal by a different hand is wheeled,  
And here the sun its circle seems to dim  
That we may see undazzled through to Him  
Of whom it is the mirror or the shield . . .

Stagnant in drains where beauty scorns to bathe,  
Yet who has seen it unalloyed with Light  
Has seen black snow, has seen unanswered faith,  
And courage unrewarded with delight.

Pool in the grime by city lanterns scarred,  
Stainless it still from every contact came  
As the light incense, orphan of the flame,  
Survives the baser fuel it has charred.

It is the sweat of Him who gave his breath,  
The white Torero—Him who took the toss  
Sky-high upon the black horns of the Cross,  
For torrying the hornèd prince of Death.

Sight of the Earth, for every star an eye,  
The element by which it sees and thinks,  
It signs upon that stark and rocky Sphinx  
Her smile of resignation to the sky.

Here though in exile from the singing shower,  
It seems to boast its quiet faith—‘To me  
The world is like a trogon-feathered tree  
That never sheds its leaves except to flower.’

It says it is the blossom in our blood  
With folded petals smiling out the sere,  
Brown, shuffled slippers of the limping year—  
The leaves that drift and whisper in the mud.

Complain those burned brown leaves? then let them go!  
(Though who should whimper whom the sun has kissed?)  
That flowers may come, outsilvering the mist,  
To stain the boasted ermines of the snow.

And now the world’s great autumn blows at last,  
The brown herd yells before it, questing death—

Folding its cape, this waits with baited breath  
To flaunt its cool evasion of the blast.

White armour of the world's exultant strife,  
In it the sunbeam is a lance at rest:  
And like a sword the sunbeam in its breast  
Lies hidden, with the miracle of life.

Honed on the spinning of the solar wheel  
This sword was wielded by the Sun's great arm:  
Stronger than dynamite, its lovely charm  
Can win its way through adamant or steel.

With one white stroke unaided and alone,  
Daring that fiery dragon to the chance,  
It cuts in half the Desert's huge expanse  
For all its menaces of sand or stone.

Wings, flowers and flames are folded in its peace—  
This common water where the sunlight falls;  
Shake it, and from your hand you can release  
A flight of coloured pigeons round the walls.

Rest, twinkling valour! on my friendly sill  
When sheep are rabid serpents may lie still:  
(Coil, Christian Tagus, round the sacred hill,  
While the Alcazar holds the fortress still.)

But when your great commandos, in the rain,  
Shall gallop singing on our thirsty lands,  
Down on my knees, my hat between my hands,  
I'll drink the huge elation of the plain.

Your spirit sings (and to its sister sprite)  
That love is God, that dying is renewal,  
That we are flames, and the black world is fuel  
To hearts that burn and battle for delight.

## To the Survivors

*For the Marquis of Baroncelli-Javon*

ust that paints their cities red  
nakes their cast-iron idols reel:  
usset locust-swarm that's spread  
their wilting crops of steel:—

gift of our protecting Sire,  
olar Christ, to purge the lands—  
: the good Promethean fire  
rich to warm our scatheless hands.

the human heart relumed,  
blaze once more with ruby light—  
trong shall seize it unconsumed,  
est will crumble at its sight.

orave from out its grudging crust  
pull the treasure that it keeps—  
n the red sheath of the rust,  
white Excalibur that sleeps:—

From its ash breathe new desire;  
From its embers snatch the Star  
glances with a triple fire  
tips the Trident of Cailar:—

One will blow flames, when nations drowse,  
With which to burn prophetic lips:  
And some find shares, with cruiser-prows,  
To heave the curling turf like ships.

Then, like Niagara set free,  
Ride on, you fine Commando: vain  
Were looking back, for all you'd see  
Were 'Charlies' running for their train!

For none save those are worthy birth  
Who neither life nor death will shun:  
And we plough deepest in the Earth  
Who ride the nearest to the Sun.

## After the Horse-fair

A MULE, the snowball of a beast!  
(Ring out the duros, test the tune)  
And a guitar, the midnight lark,  
That rises silvering the dark  
An hour before the rosy-fleeced  
Arrival of the Moon.

The gypsies quarried from the gloom,  
For their carouse, a silver hall:  
And jingled harness filled the lands  
With gay pesetas changing hands,  
So silvery, there seemed no room  
For any moon at all.

Two figtrees on a whitewashed wall  
Were playing chess; a lamp was queen:  
Beneath the civil guard were seen  
With tricornered hats—a game of cards:  
One bottle was between them all,  
Good health, and kind regards.

A stable with an open door  
And in the yard a dying hound:

Out on the dunes a broken spoor  
Converging into twenty more—  
When torches had been flashed around  
Were all they could restore.

A wind that blows from other countries  
Shook opals from the vernal palms  
Birdshot of the silver huntress  
By which the nightingale was slain:  
With stitch of fire the distant farms  
Were threaded by the train.

One rider, then, and all alone—  
The long Castilian Veld before:  
To show the way his shadow straight  
Went on ahead and would not wait  
But seemed, so infinitely grown,  
Equator to the Moor.

Till with a faint adoring thunder,  
Their lances raised to Christ the King,  
Through all the leagues he had to go—  
An army chanting smooth and low,  
Across the long mirage of wonder  
He heard the steeples sing.

And as, far off, the breaking morn  
Had hit the high seraphic town,  
He prayed for lonesome carbineers  
And wakeful lovers, rash of years,  
Who've harvested the lunar corn  
Before the crops were brown.

For thieves: the gate-man late and lonely  
With his green flag; for tramps that sprawl:  
And lastly for a frozen guy  
That towed six mules along the sky  
And felt among them all the only,  
Or most a mule of all!

## To the Sun

*This was the last poem of Mithraic Emblems,  
but I judged it better to separate it*

OH let your shining orb grow dim,  
Of Christ the mirror and the shield,  
That I may gaze through you to Him,  
See half the miracle revealed,  
And in your seven hues behold  
The Blue Man walking on the Sea,  
The Green, beneath the summer tree,  
Who called the children; then the Gold,  
With palms: the Orange, flaring bold  
With scourges: Purple in the garden  
(As Greco saw): and then the Red  
Torero (Him who took the toss  
And rode the black horns of the cross—  
But rose snow-silver from the dead!)

## Faith

*To Wyndham Lewis*

WHILE the land drowns  
And through the spacious hours  
The dark herd browses,  
Low horns with level sweep  
Like sickles, half in sleep,  
The golden lilies reap  
And mow the flowers.

White egrets ride  
Each bossy croup and dome  
Of sombre hide,  
Like silver plumes that wave  
Black hearses to the grave  
Or on the midnight wave  
The torching foam:—

Some of them bolder  
Flit round my horse: and one  
Lights on my shoulder  
Preening his ermine there  
But with as little care  
As of the passing air  
Or faded sun.

Signal and sign  
Of snowy truce to men!  
Unfurl the fine  
White thistles of your frills,  
Fan from my brain its ills,  
And from your slender quills  
Shed me a pen—

That I may write  
All that from here I mark:  
How, singed with light,  
Black-bodied though it goes  
The hornèd crescent shows,  
Where one hind-quarter glows,  
Branded, the Dark!

Though from a star—  
So horned, so black with spite,  
Might seem from far  
The thunder-bearing world  
Through soot and fury hurled,  
On its dark hump is furled  
A flame as white.

Cyphered with Light  
(Its Master's brand and name)

Though dim to sight,  
Its shadow loom to seat  
The solar paraclete  
Faint-silvered, like a sleet  
Of ghostly flame—

Just as this moon,  
Far straying bull, now lost  
Beyond the dune:  
It bears an egret white  
To torch it through the night,  
Save but to Faith, its light  
A wraith of frost.

Patience will keep  
That phantom torch aglow  
That seems asleep  
To all but watchful eyes:  
And live to see it rise  
Sun-drawn into the skies  
With swans of snow.

For they'll survive  
Who from an offal-heap  
Can feed and thrive,  
Thanking their God for life,

As for a friend or wife;  
And count the pain or strife  
As over-cheap.

To be a slave  
Content: or driven, first  
Of the mad wave,  
In the front rank to fight—  
What matter Left or Right,  
So in our hearts the light  
For which we thirst?

For humble herds are we  
As those with which we ride,  
And daily see  
In our own toil, that warns,  
The boaster with his scorns  
Thrown by the very horns  
That were his pride.

Then—with the worst  
Accepted, best to trust—  
Only can burst  
This passion so divine  
As blackens all the shine  
Of wealth, the lust of wine,  
The wine of lust—

The seeded spark  
That in the few can spring,  
To whom the dark  
Is room and scope; the Night,  
When most a foe to sight,  
The fiercest appetite  
For what we bring.

From sky to sky that bleeds  
Derided warnings,  
As hornèd Tagus leads  
His myriad waves to graze  
With moonèd brows ablaze,  
To trample down the days  
And toss the mornings!—

Our chosen herds,  
All torch-lit with the snow  
Of ghostly birds,  
Mooned by the droving Light  
And surging on with might,  
Are rivers to the Night  
Through which we go!

## Familiar Dæmon

MEASURING out my life in flagons  
(No coffee-spoon to skim the flood)  
You were the prince of thirsty dragons,  
The gay carouser of my blood:  
We could not part, our love was such,  
But gasconading, shared the fun  
While every cripple's shouldered crutch  
Was sighted at me like a gun.  
What sport to-day? to swim or fly?  
Or fish for thunder in the sky?  
What laughter out of hell to fetch,  
Or joy from peril, have you planned,  
You sunward rider, that you stretch  
The downswung stirrup of my hand?

## Dedication of a Tree

*To 'Peter Warlock'*

THIS laurel-tree to Heseltine I vow  
With one cicada silvering its shade—  
Who lived, like him, a golden gasconade,  
And will die whole when winter burns the bough:  
Who in one hour, resounding, clear, and strong,  
A century of ant-hood far out-glows,  
And burns more sunlight in a single song  
Than they can store against the winter snows.

## Klipspringer

BETTER than any pedigree  
Merino ram was,  
I always thought to be  
A klipspringer or chamois.  
Fanned by the eagle's wing,  
Mated by choice—  
Not by necessity to cling  
At every bleating voice.  
These were the ways I chose,  
A Kopje for my zone:  
Nothing; not a rose  
In that bleak height was grown!  
Only an iron lily grew, the grail,  
On to that cliff to cling:  
And a steel nightingale,  
Steel on the stone to ring!

## Florentino Ballesteros II (The son)

*Killed in the Arena, May, 1934*

SUCH work can be the mischief of an hour.  
This drunken-looking doll without a face  
Was lovely Florentino. This was grace  
And virtue smiling on the face of Power.

Shattered, that slim Toledo-tempered spine!  
Hollow, the chrysalis, his gentle hand,  
From which those wide imperial moths were fanned  
Each in its hushed miraculous design!

He was the bee, with danger for his rose!  
He died the sudden violence of Kings,  
And from the bullring to the Virgin goes  
Floating his cape. He has no need for wings.

## The Circle

WHEN in that living love we flare to,  
The darkness of your hair we raise,  
A cloud of incense, smoking praise,  
From the knit fires that we compare to,  
All round the circle that we make  
(Two spirits in a coloured wheel)  
To make the rolling world unreel  
Would seem the orbit that we take,  
Wherein a sailing bubble goes  
Stained with the sapphire and the rose,  
Reflecting forests, towns, and spires,  
The spectrum of the sun, the sea—  
And splits in seven solar fires  
All that remains of you or me.

## Pomegranates

SUNG by the nightingale to birth  
Whose ringing pearls were all the dew  
With which, the long dry summer through,  
The rainless azure fed their dearth—

Pomegranates, colder than the noon,  
In whom a maiden breast rebels  
Forcing the smooth gold of their shells  
To split with rubies to the moon.

In whose half-opened husks we see,  
Where the rich blood of autumn swells,  
The membranes and the rosy cells  
To which the sunbeam was the bee:—

Like musing brows with patience fraught  
Until their secret gems be shown,  
And through their inward toil alone  
Made royal with a crown of thought:—

As to some poet's labours wed  
To dream Golcondas from despair,  
Till some pure act of faith or prayer  
Shall freeze the crimson tears they shed:—

Like lovers' hearts to ripeness grown  
The rapturous red wine they bleed  
Is chambered in each lustrous seed  
As light within a carven stone.

Warm-flushing through their films of frost  
With rosy smiles and crystal teeth  
A yielding beauty seems to breathe  
Whose language on our lips is lost.

Their speech in coolness dies away,  
Thawed by a breath, they change and tremble  
As the lips they most resemble  
When one red kiss is all they say.

Too fain in fragrance to escape,  
Their form eludes the clearest phrase  
When Psyche, in a sister's praise,  
Would carve her crystals in their shape.

In vain her vision seeks to prove  
The secret structure of those grains  
Whose dewy membranes and lit veins  
Remind her most of those I love.

If new similitudes to try,  
Fusing them with her speech, she sips

Those seeds whose death upon the lips  
Is half a kiss and half a sigh—

Moulding those phrases with her tongue  
That melt as sweetly, by a spell  
So transient that she cannot tell  
If they be tasted, kissed, or sung—

Their gems so ruddy to the eye  
Are snow upon the mouth that sips:  
But even when they cheat the lips  
And, born of song, in perfume die,—

Are most conspiring with her theme  
The true resemblance to disclose,  
And tell the secrets of the rose  
Whose changing reveries they seem.

## Vaquero's Lament

*On getting a cheque*

WITH a black streamer fasten our guitar  
For mourning is the colour we must choose—  
Black as my horse, the darker for a star,  
Who shoals the glittering mackerel of his thews  
In one great midnight wave—to match your hair.  
(As he is to the ground, it to the air,  
Liquid and light, a traveller in fire.)  
Then pour the wine; for whose one ruby spark,  
Its gloom is more religious, deep, and dark,  
And turn on me the eyes that never tire,  
Darker than wine is, darker than your hair,  
Yet burnished by the same eternal morning.  
I am in love with black; and we go mourning  
(Girl, horse, guitar, and wine) for buried care.

## Vaquero to his Wife

SINCE from his charred mechanic Hells  
Now to his native form restored,  
The azure soul of Steel rebels  
Refulgent in a single Sword  
Whose edge of Famine, honed with ire,  
Flames forth his threat to all the lands  
Where wheels and furnaces conspire  
To rob the skill from human hands,  
From human hearts the solar fire;  
And since the yellow, spangled Fay  
Rifting her dungeons to the day,  
Bewitching all, in havoc flies  
To daunt the great and fool the wise,  
And scatter carnage in her play,  
But soon, her fearful vengeance done,  
Will sparkle only for the eyes  
And be a daughter to the Sun—  
By what laws other should we hold  
Than those they leave without repeal,  
That breathed your cheeks with down of Gold  
And shinned my horse with rods of Steel?

## Toril

OWD Another Bull! another Bull!

OX You heard?  
Your number's up, the people gave the word!

BULL Feasted on flowers, the darling of the days,  
To-day I've ghastly asphodels to graze,  
Harsh sand to bite, and my own blood to swill—  
Whose dewlap loved the golden-rolling rill,  
When through the rushes, burnished like its tide,  
The lovely cirrus of my thews would slide,  
My heart flame-glazing through the silken skin  
Joy of its mighty furnace lit within.  
These crescent horns that scimitared the moon,  
These eyes, the flaming emeralds of noon,  
Whose orbs were fuel to the deathless rays  
And burned the long horizon with their gaze—  
All now to be cut down, and soon to trail  
A sledge of carrion at a horse's tail!

OX Flame in the flaming noon, I've seen you run.  
The Anvil of Toledo's now your Sun  
Whose furious aurora they unfold  
(A hurricane of scarlet and of gold)

Whose iron clangs for you, whose dawn you feel,  
The target of its burnished ray of steel!

BULL Ox as you are, what should you know of this  
Who never neared the verge of that abyss?

ox Ox as I am, none better knows than I  
Who led your father's father here to die.  
Declaiming clown, I am the mute, the wise;  
Poets would read enigmas in my eyes.  
My being is confederate with pain  
Mine to endure as yours is to complain;  
I am the thinker, satisfied to know,  
And bought this wisdom for a life of woe.  
Be brave, be patient, and reserve your breath.

BULL But tell me what is blacker than this Death?

ox My impotence.

BULL It was your soul that spoke!—  
More hideous than this martyrdom?

ox The Yoke!

## Written in the Horse-truck

FULL of adieus as this late train  
The World's great Autumn blows at last  
And far and shrill across the plain  
Whistles the engine of the Past.  
Stitching the night with threads of fire,  
A stream of fire-flies lit with pain,  
Though Life should prove a shunting train  
That rumbles on the wheels of ire,  
With contraband I've lit my pipe  
The strong tobacco of my Luck,  
There are few tears for us to wipe  
Who travel in the cheapest truck  
Whose lamp swings like an orange, ripe  
And ready for the Muse to pluck.

## Rust

SEE there, and there it gnaws, the Rust—  
Voet-ganger of the coming swarm  
Whose winged innumerable storm  
Shall grind their pylons into dust.

Whose dropped asphyxiating dung  
Shall fall exploding blood and mire;  
Whose cropping teeth of rattled fire  
Shall make one cud of old and young;—

Till turning from the carnage then  
Themselves in anger to devour,  
Shall die a race of weary men—

And all to spring the dainty flower  
That, herding on that blasted heath,  
A cowboy chews between his teeth.

## Junction of Rails

### *Voice of the Steel*

CITIES of cinemas and lighted bars,  
Smokers of tall bituminous cigars,  
Whose evenings are a smile of golden teeth—  
Upon your cenotaphs I lay this wreath  
And so commend you to the moon and stars.

For I attain your presence in the dark  
Deriding gossip Reuter's twittered spark  
And reach you rails that, swifter in career,  
Arrive as due as they depart from here—  
I am a tour on which the hours embark.

Through me the moon, in ruled meridian steel,  
Unwinding journeys from a burnished reel,  
Stitches the world with threads of fire: each clue,  
Pulleyed with rolling-stock as webs with dew,  
A nerve for sleeping capitals to feel.

Their life-blood circulating in my veins,  
With runnelled iron I irrigate the plains  
And spider touring metal through the rock,  
While to the same tentacular tick-tock  
My scarecrow signals semaphore their trains.

Under this bleak mechanical display  
I screen an inward knowledge, when the day  
X-rays the fingers of my open hand  
Over the chess-board acres of the land  
Whose towns are shifted peons in the play.

Progress, the blue macadam of their dream,  
Its railed and shining hippodrome of steam,  
Glazed by cool horsepower, varnished clean with wheels,  
Filming their destiny in endless reels,  
Defers the formal ending that they scheme.

They greet each other in these gliding cars,  
Read the same nightly journal of the stars,  
And when the rail rings I can hear the bells  
Ringing for dinner in the world's hotels,  
And after that the closing of the bars.

Though they have taught the lightning how to lie  
And made their wisdom to misread the sky  
I hold their pulses: through my ringing loom  
Their trains with flying shuttles weave a doom  
I am too sure a prophet to defy.

And when they jargon through the wind and rain  
Breathing false hopes upon a frosty pane,  
I hear the sad electrocuted words

Thud from the wires like stiffly-frozen birds  
That warming hands resuscitate in vain.

The de Profundis of each canine hell  
Voices their needs in its voluptuous swell:  
While from the slums the radio's hollow strain  
From hungry guts ventriloquizing pain  
Belies them, as it sobs that all is well.

Then like a flawless magnet to the fact  
Into my secret knowledge I attract  
Their needles of dissimulated fear  
Whose trembling fingers indicate me here  
The focus of their every mood and act.

What hopes are theirs, what knowledge they forgo  
From day to day procrastinating woe—  
I, balancing each project and desire,  
Funambulize upon my strands of fire  
Too many aspirations not to know.

I am the plexus of their myriad schemes,  
And were I flesh the ruin would undo me  
Of all the purposes they sinew through me,

Of thwarted embassies, and beaten teams,  
And home-returning honeymoons as gloomy.

How shrill the long hosannas of despair  
With which those to-fro scolopendras bear,  
Statesmen to conferences, troops to war—  
All that concerted effort can restore  
Like rattled cans to porters of despair!

But in the waiting-room where Time has beckoned  
His vanguard, every moment must be reckoned  
And fierce anticipation push the clock  
Though for each same reiterated second  
The whole world swing its pendulum of rock.

Far on the plain my waving pennons stream,  
In the blue light the white horsetailing steam:  
Or where they storm the night with rosy cirrus—  
(Armoured incendiary, plummy Pyrrhus!)  
Through palaces of ice where eagles scream.

From fog-red docks, the sink of rotting drains,  
Where, tipsy giants, reel the workless cranes:  
Where in dead liners, that the rust attacks,  
Sprung decks think back beyond the saw and axe,  
And masts put on the green of country lanes—

I tentacle the news: relay the mails:  
And sense the restive anger that prevails  
Wherever shafts descend or girders rise:  
And day and night their steel-to-steel replies  
Hum in my bolts and tingle in my rails.

These tons of metal rusting in the rain  
(Iron on strike) are singing one refrain:  
Let steel hang idle, burning rust devour,  
Till Beauty smile upon the face of Power  
And Love unsheathe me from the rust again . . .

My rails that rove me through the whispered corn  
Bring me the tidings of a world unborn:  
My sleepers escalading to the skies  
Beyond the far horizons seem to rise  
And form a Jacob's ladder to the morn.

And I have often thought by lonely sidings—  
What shepherd or what cowboy in his ridings  
Forges the Sword so terrible and bright  
That brings not peace, but fury of delight,  
And of whose coming I have had the tidings.

They are the tidings of a world's relief:  
My aching rails run out for their belief

To where a halted star or rising Crescent  
Above a byre or sheepfold hangs quiescent,  
And meditation reaps the golden sheaf—

The joy that veld and kopje thrice restored  
To that bleak wilderness the city horde—  
When once the living radios of God,  
By ravens fed, the lonely places trod,  
And talked with foxes, and with lions roared.

A sword is singing and a scythe is reaping  
In those great pylons prostrate in the dust,  
Death has a sword of valour in his keeping  
To arm our souls towards the future leaping:  
And holy holy holy is the rust  
Wherein the blue Excaliburs are sleeping!



II

TOLEDO, 1936



## Toledo (July, 1936)

TOLEDO, when I saw you die  
And heard the roof of Carmel crash,  
A spread-winged phoenix from its ash  
The Cross remained against the sky!  
With horns of flame and haggard eye  
The mountain vomited with blood,  
A thousand corpses down the flood  
Were rolled gesticulating by,  
And high above the roaring shells  
I heard the silence of your bells  
Who've left these broken stones behind  
Above the years to make your home,  
And burn, with Athens and with Rome,  
A sacred city of the mind.

## Hot Rifles

OUR rifles were too hot to hold,  
The night was made of tearing steel,  
And down the street the volleys rolled  
Where as in prayer the snipers kneel.  
From every cranny, rift, or creek,  
I heard the fatal furies scream,  
And the moon held the river's gleam  
Like a long rifle to its cheek.  
Of all that fearful fusillade  
I reckoned not the gain or loss  
To see (her every forfeit paid)  
And grander, though her riches fade,  
Toledo, hammered on the Cross,  
And in her Master's wounds arrayed.

## Christs in Uniform

CLOSE at my side a girl and boy  
Fell firing, in the doorway here,  
Collapsing with a strangled cheer  
As on the very couch of joy,  
And onward through a wall of fire  
A thousand others rolled the surge,  
And where a dozen men expire  
A hundred myrmidons emerge—  
As if the Christ, our Solar Sire,  
Magnificent in their intent,  
Returned the bloody way he went,  
Of so much blood, of such desire,  
And so much valour proudly spent,  
To weld a single heart of fire.

## The Alcazar

THIS Rock of Faith, the thunder-blasted—  
Eternity will hear it rise  
With those who (Hell itself out-lasting)  
Will lift it with them to the skies!  
Till whispered through the depths of Hell  
The censored Miracle be known,  
And flabbergasted Fiends re-tell  
How fiercer tortures than their own  
By living faith were overthrown;  
How mortals, thinned to ghastly pallor,  
Gangrened and rotting to the bone,  
With winged souls of Christian valour  
Beyond Olympus or Valhalla  
Can heave ten million tons of stone!

## The Mocking Bird

LIKE an old Cobra broken with a stick,  
As in the ward with other crocks I lay  
(Flies on the roof their sole arithmetic  
Which they must count to pass the time of day)—  
Born of my wound, or out of Bosch remembered,  
Or by my own delirium designed,  
A strange blue bird, it seemed I knew the kind  
And the fierce look with which his eyes were embered,  
For they had been spectators of the Fall—  
Perched on my foot, I knew his ringing call,  
And 'Shoo!' I cried, 'you phantom, fade away!  
For here are canyons forested with sleep,  
The woods are silent, and the shades are deep,  
While you intrude the colours of the day.  
I flinch before your lit triumphal pinion,  
Your bloodshot gaze, the memory of strife,  
Your cry, the laughing mockery of Life,  
So raucous here, where sleep should have dominion!  
But as he would have flown I rose to follow,  
A will was born where all things else were hollow,  
And through those caverns of ancestral cedar  
Where all but downward streams had lost their way  
His voice of mocking laughter was my leader—  
The blue hallucination of a jay!

## The Fight

ONE silver-white and one of scarlet hue,  
Storm-hornets humming in the wind of death,  
Two aeroplanes were fighting in the blue  
Above our town; and if I held my breath,  
It was because my youth was in the Red  
While in the White an unknown pilot flew—  
And that the White had risen overhead.

From time to time the crackle of a gun  
Far into flawless ether faintly railed,  
And now, mosquito-thin, into the Sun,  
And now like mating dragonflies they sailed:  
And, when like eagles near the earth they drove,  
The Red, still losing what the White had won,  
The harder for each lost advantage strove.

So lovely lay the land—the towers and trees  
Taking the seaward counsel of the stream:  
The city seemed, above the far-off seas,  
The crest and turret of a Jacob's dream,  
And those two gun-birds in their frantic spire  
At death-grips for its ultimate regime—  
Less to be whirled by anger than desire.

Till (Glory!) from his chrysalis of steel  
The Red flung wide the fatal fans of fire:  
I saw the long flames, ribboning, unreel,  
And slow bitumen trawling from his pyre.  
I knew the ecstasy, the fearful throes,  
And the white phoenix from his scarlet sire,  
As silver in the Solitude he rose.

The towers and trees were lifted hymns of praise,  
The city was a prayer, the land a nun:  
The noonday azure strumming all its rays  
Sang that a famous battle had been won,  
As signing his white Cross, the very Sun,  
The Solar Christ and captain of my days  
Zoomed in the azure; and his will was done.

## Christ in the Hospital

*Al Padre Evaristo, Carmelita Descalzo, Toledo*

IXIONS of the slow wheel of the day  
They had come down at last, but not to stay,  
And at the fall of night, with even sway,  
Were slowly wheeling up the other way.

Putting his hat on—with a hissed ‘good night—’  
(As an old cobra hoods himself with spite)  
The Doctor left. The Nuns had dimmed the light  
And the grey walls rose sighing out of sight.

And he who felt the finest in the Ward  
Was scarcely better than a broken stick;  
His spine ran through him like a rusty sword  
Rasping its meagre scabbard to the quick.

Through the dim pane he saw the stars take flight  
Like pigeons scattered by the crash and groan  
Of the great world, with pendulum of stone  
Dingdonging in the steeple of the Night.

He heard, far off, the people stream their course  
Whipped by their pleasures into frantic tops—  
As the grey multitude (when twilight drops)  
Goes out to trade its boredom for remorse.

The Moon, a soldier with a bleeding eye,  
Returning to the war, beheld these things.  
And long grey tom-cats crept across the sky  
Between the chimneys where the wireless sings.

Never seemed anything so steep or tall  
(Sierra, iceberg, or the tower of noon),  
As what he saw when turning from the moon—  
The bloody Christ that hung upon the wall!

Great Albatross, of every storm the Birth!—  
His bleeding pinions bracketed a Night  
Too small for His embrace; and from his Height,  
As from an Eagle's, cowered the plaintive Earth!

## Posada

OUTSIDE, it froze. On rocky arms  
Sleeping face-upwards to the sun  
Lay Spain. Her golden hair was spun  
From sky to sky. Her mighty charms  
Breathed soft beneath her robe of farms  
And gardens: while her snowy breasts,  
Sierras white, with crimson crests,  
Were stained with sunset. At the Inn,  
A priest, a soldier, and a poet  
(Fate-summoned, though they didn't know it)  
Met there, a shining hour to win.  
A song, a blessing, and a grin  
Were melted in one cup of mirth,  
The Eternal Triumvirs of Earth  
Foresaw their golden age begin.

## To my Jockey

*Killed at my side by the shock troops, Toledo, March 16*

*For the Guitar*

I NEVER felt such glory  
As handcuffs on my wrists,  
My body stunned and gory  
And toothmarks on my fists,  
The triumph through the square  
(My horse behind me led),  
A pistol at my cutlets,  
Three rifles at my head.  
And four of those black bastards  
To hold a single man:  
And four to take him to the gaol—  
Proclaiming thus my clan.  
Through the great grill I saw  
Our other horse had fled  
With empty saddle: then I knew,  
'Mosquito,' you were dead!  
And down along the mesa  
The sun was swirling red—  
To show that Death is royal,  
As royal as our Life  
(You took it as a mistress,

I'll take it as a wife).  
There's a black Virgin,  
There's a gipsy Christ  
Out of whose wounds are pouring  
The gouts that make me wise.  
And there's the black Saint Sarah  
That lives beside the Sea  
And prays for each vaquero  
The same as you or me.  
I lift you like a coney,  
Collect your scattered tripes,  
Wrap round the gay horse-blanket  
(Like you, all scarlet stripes),  
I bury you brave gypsy—  
You only had your knife!  
In death collect the pleasure  
That I collect in life.  
I too am friends with danger  
And to salute the brave  
I'll stand up, though a stranger,  
The cypress on your grave.

## After the Riots, Toledo, March, 1936

### *To my Wife*

OUR tired old men lament increasing age  
Because they have no Christian Faith.  
But we'll go torrying the whole earth's rage,  
And laughing at a wraith.  
The 'Anglo-communist' or '-catholic'—  
That prefix means self-satisfied, luke-warm;  
But we go skating where the mud is thick,  
The topsy-turvy petrels of the storm!  
We will seek danger, we will hunt out pain—  
No Christian fears to die!  
We'll be the whitest in the blood-red Spain  
A silver cloud against the sunset sky.  
Twice, when they've put me up against the wall—  
Their rifles made me laugh!  
(To wait the 'little bird', I could recall,  
As, when a child, they took my photograph.)  
To mock their wicked tortures, and forgive,  
Was what disarmed the slaves.  
I do not fear to die, nor beg to live—  
This world is full of graves!



III

HORIZON

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

*THE author takes no responsibility for the form or content of some of the following satirical or topical poems, which have had to be emasculated down to pommie level.*

*For the cost of typing he will consider sending full versions to people who want them—and take full responsibility for any Charlie who runs off with a thick ear to a lawyer: that is if the Charlie doesn't prefer to see him on the continent.*

*Also there is an essay on modern Charlie verse, entitled A YARN WITH OLD WOODLEY, in which the present 'corner' in poetry is examined. This will also be available.*

R. G.

## Dedication to Mary Campbell

*'None will break ranks.'*—WILFRED OWEN

FOLLY in towns, like maggots in a corpse,  
But wisdom breeds with leisure in the dorps;  
Vain is the trek where haste with nature strives  
If at the journey's end a fool arrives;  
Cool as the Roman, as the tortoise slow,  
I lay my road around me as I go,  
For there's less wisdom in a hasty thing  
Than in the daftest butterfly of spring.  
I write no telegrams that cannot wait  
Because to-morrow they'd be out of date,  
What news I have (it's not a vast amount)  
Myself I carry, and myself recount  
No Reuter, but a postman of the sun  
Who loves to loiter when the others run.  
My pen the spur, my rhyme the jingled rein,  
My hand the downswung strirrup of my brain,  
Although I've had to spurt to save my hide  
A canter is my ordinary stride;  
I like to feel the landscape moving by  
Gradual and smooth and almost on the sly,  
For I'm the sort of guy that rides and sings.  
Train-window, tourist insight into things

Was never in my line; the way I go  
Zigzags too quickly but arrives too slow;  
I call at friendly shelters by the way  
And often turn the midnight into day;  
My horse would bear me slumbering afar,  
And I have been arrested by a Star!  
They never could recruit me for their Scouts  
Because I had so many ins-and-outs—  
I'd plant my scouting pole to bear me fruit  
And in its shade lie pillowed at the root  
Absent from roll-call, by a dream delayed  
When Bugles sound the Bolshevik parade.  
When, due for duty off to draw my cash,  
To paint the city and to cut a dash  
With saddle-bags ding-donging like the bells  
That ring for dinner in the world's hotels;  
And when the dueros cease their happy din  
To greet my messmate, Hunger, with a grin—  
That sterling chap sham bolshies do not know,  
Whose hat the moon is, and his coat the snow,  
So staunch a friend when all the rest depart  
To sharpen wit and fortify the heart,  
For fasts revive our pleasures when they cloy  
And are the springboards of Eternal Joy:  
You ask old Ghandi, or my friend the priest—

First in the fast is foremost in the feast!  
Across the world more lightly we can sail  
Than Attila (whose kitchen was his tail).  
Diogenes to me was an esquire  
Who thought his house insured against the fire,  
While you and I with no more luggage pass  
Than springbok bounding over plains of grass—  
Free as the air, responsible to none,  
Soldiers of chance, and troopers of the Sun.  
Luck on our side, we play at pitch and toss  
Christ for our king and Mithras for our boss;  
Procrastination saves me half my time—  
To live comes first with me—to them a crime:  
That shadow-chorus to whose chant I act  
In all their emptiness the only fact,  
For having twice set foot upon their shore  
As I have done on half a dozen more.  
Cunctator, though no Fabian, I must fight  
As best befits who travel swift and light.  
I like this sort of warfare: a cadet  
Of Bolivar, Sertorius, and de Wet  
My forces I collect and then disband  
And when the least expected am at hand  
Although not there, forever in their mind,  
Six years although I left them all behind.

I scorn the goose-step of their massed attack  
And fight with my guitar slung on my back,  
Against a regiment I oppose a brain  
And a dark horse against an armoured train:  
I like to trick their marksmen having shown  
My dummy image from behind a stone,  
To hear their yell of triumph when they score  
And then to snipe off half a dozen more.  
In their day-dreams they've killed me thrice a day  
Swearing I'm dead they daily blaze away  
And all their noisy shelling of the kop  
Only proclaims who's fighting there on top.  
They're the pink Tommies, all in order lined,  
Poking each other onward from behind  
To face one single muzzle-loading gun,  
Because it gets its nitre from the sun.  
But, as it is, the odds are on my side,  
This age is broken ground on which we ride,  
Fatal to heavy troops this great Waste Land  
Was for the neat guerilla nicely planned,  
Whose only luggage is his light guitar,  
Whose compass is the love-delighting Star,  
Who takes advice from every winding stream,  
Or stone (the pillow of a Jacob's dream)  
Makes of the wilderness his posh hotel,

And drinks his fill where armies dry the well.  
Of phalanxes this era breaks the line  
And seems with my own tactics to combine;  
Added to that, they're loaded with despair  
The meanest sin that blackens earth or air!  
Weighed down by conscious guilt themselves they dread  
More than the fiercest enemy ahead.  
Vain is the frosty non-committal sneer,  
Against the human laugh, the human tear,  
And the sad rictus of each cynic grin  
Betrays the toxins rioting within—  
But may the Devil all my molars pull  
When I grow tired of torrying John Bull!  
For he was never braver with his gun  
Than when he numbered ninety-nine to one;  
Number and repetition are his law—  
'None will break ranks,' as Owen long foresaw;  
Jock Stot's the same—but when the bullets whistle  
Up goes the White flag, and down comes the Thistle . . .

. . . These are the guys that have no time to wait  
Though wisdom has a trick of coming late,  
A butterfly that stops at every flower  
And with a golden leisure hoards the hour,  
Which these have squandered in their breathless haste

And through their open bilges run to waste.  
So how to round them up? and where impound  
This legion of the lost that can't be found?  
No need to hurry; with an easy mind  
We catch them—where they left themselves behind!  
For without one exception to the rule  
They just can't keep from hanging round their school.  
It holds the sum of all their earthly joys  
And they'll be Masters if they can't be boys;  
And here to prove it running to the minute  
Shunts in the train with all the 'Old Boys' in it.  
The chaps all shouted like a single fool  
'Woodley! Old Woodley! Welcome home to School!'  
Then the new Master from his study burst  
Not quite so much a Coward as the first  
He cracked a joke, made everybody laugh—  
John Bull, Jock Stot, and little Jacky Calf.  
Back to the fields where Waterloo was won,  
Majuba lost (they blame it on the sun!)  
They came out hiking in their shorts and specs  
And the sun passed his brand around their necks,  
So well Apollo knows that bovine crew  
He always ropes them with a red lasso;  
One uniform he has for dons or scholars  
Red knee-caps and the ringworm for their collars.

To find a red-neck cheap upon this day  
You do not need to wander far away—  
Each comes with his pink halter to your hand  
And noosing one you seem to noose the band:  
Rodin outdone, this concourse seems to be  
A thousand Calais burghers on the spree,  
So many of them and so like as fleas  
You cannot see the Woodleys for the trees.

To you I hand them, with this bunch of keys.

## Passing an Examination

With terminologized hypnoses  
Identify yourselves, and be  
A weak solution of those selves  
In popular neuroses—  
In your imaginary Fluids  
Of Energy or Time,  
The eyeless, faceless, armless, legless  
Gods of the un-sublime  
Raw protoplasmic slime.  
'Pau sto?' you ask an idiot God  
Without a soul, or brain, or will.  
Christ's trumpet tears my carnal grave,  
Rips turf and sod  
From ear to earthly ear;  
And this is all I hear—  
That Time was always Now  
And Space was always Here.  
Whirl, whirl, excited nebulae,  
Storm, and destroy, and kill!  
My faith is in the Centre, there,  
Where courage keeps you vertical,  
Where death is horizontal,  
And cyclones keep you still.

## Prologue

*To Dr. T. J. Haarhoff*

RED bells ding-donging in the solar steeple  
To progress as to matins called the people,  
The tense air hummed with new importance, and a  
Fine aeroplane was snowing propaganda  
As if from the torn mattress of the sky  
Some thumping fist had made the feathers fly—  
Plumes for the People, pinions for the plain,  
And wings to rise with on the social plane;  
Confetti for the marriage of extremes  
And down to stuff the pillow-case of dreams;  
The sky was hung with bales of frowsy stuff  
And heaven seemed one festival of fluff—  
Beneath, John Bull stood ankle deep in mud  
And of his morning paper chewed the cud,  
While all around him, splashing through the rain,  
A million Charlies waddled for the train;  
Save for the flying chits no clouds but these  
That settled fluttering in the leafless trees  
Urging the frozen Charlies as they ran  
To rise and battle for the rights of man—  
What rights they'd get, the context did not show  
Except to answer syrens when they blow.

The sky had been reformed. There was no moon,  
The Sun resigned before the afternoon,  
The morning got the sack for being late  
And daytime had been voted out of date;  
The stars were scrapped by order (for their fires  
Had had some sort of dealing with our sires)  
But overhead more orderly to show  
A roof of patent globes was seen to glow,  
Not flung in gay disorder through the skies  
But parallel and of a standard size,  
With numbers on them, written large and plain,  
And holes between them—to let in the rain;  
Of planets they had scarified the sky,  
But left the poor old world, the Lord knows why,  
To turn war-roasted on the same old spit  
And drizzle rancid fat into the Pit—  
Or molten tar, perhaps, no matter which,  
For it was all macadimized with pitch;  
Save where some strips of grass were seen to grow  
So that some prohibitions there might show,  
For there is no such fine manure as grass  
For sprouting notices ‘You must not pass!’  
By this the Charlies their free culture show  
Chasing themselves from where they like to go,  
And Demos only dubs himself a knight

By kicking his own tail, with all his might!  
There as I rode the last remaining heath,  
A cowboy with a rose between my teeth,  
Their gendarmes cycled up to me. I heard  
'Here is the guy to whom we gave the Bird.  
What is your Number?' So I answered 'One!  
As everybody's underneath the Sun.  
Count me, twice over, if you can't see that  
You must be drunk, or peeping through your hat.  
Come to the point. Why should I have to prompt it?'  
'You've got the Bird,' they sobbed, 'our little Tom-tit:  
You've got our Bird, and now we want it back!'  
'My bird is white,' I said, 'and yours is black.  
There is your little Tom-tit, see him fly  
Moulting his paper feathers from the sky;  
Go chase and read them, dithering as they float,  
They'll get the people, but they get my goat.  
Smell him as he goes carbonading by  
With reeking hell to fumigate the sky,  
Wait till you smell his eggs and then you'll own  
You've got some little Tom-tit of your own!  
But *mine*? At times when herding on the Flat  
A snow-white Egret perches on my hat,  
For whom to hawk, the cattle as they pass  
Rouse up the whirring hoppers from the grass,

And if my little Bird has whispered true,  
As he to them, so yours will be to you.  
I am the son of Abel, you of Cain;  
You planned the town, I herded on the plain!  
You multiply for slaughter, I remain.  
God smelt my sacrifice, his nostrils full  
With the sweet incense of the yearling bull;  
Your artichokes and cabbages were bad  
And that's why market-gardeners are sad;  
Your bards in panic eye the self same stars  
That tango to the lilt of our guitars.  
You flung the stone in envy—from behind!—  
Projectile of the vegetable mind;  
A million cowboys sprang from Abel's blood,  
First it screamed out (so alien to the mud!)  
But from it rose, Niagara set free,  
Our White Commando prancing like the sea;  
See the white manes along the skyline streaming  
And the blue wind among those breakers creaming.  
Darío, there, the Chiron of our fold,  
Sounding us onward with his conch of gold,  
And close behind him see Chocano ride  
The Triton of our silver-crested tide;  
With snaffles flaking into suds of snow—  
“We came from far; and very far shall go!” ’

## Survey Thyself?

BETTER in these dead seas of dudgeon  
Than dead meat, be a living gudgeon,  
To strike out hard, to do your trudgeon,  
And swim!

Than perish in Narcissus' style  
When with hushed, water-lurking wile,  
His shadow played the crocodile  
To him,

And seizing by his muddled head  
Hung on, until the fool was dead,  
Then stowed him in the river bed  
To rot!

For youth is cheaper than buck's meat  
Though far more delicate to eat:  
I've swallowed mine—it was a treat,  
And hot!

That minotaurish tragelaph  
Of whom I've slain the fatted calf  
Yet here survive—the human half  
And twin;

And when from brooks I next would quaff  
(In liquid form) my photograph,  
Be its effect to make me laugh

And grin!  
Snakes swallowing their tails no doubt  
Find matters likewise slewed about  
And like a stocking are turned out-  
Side in.  
'Survey thyself' is all the cry  
'With spectacles; mistrust the Eye'  
So, Ego hypnotizes I  
Within;  
But if your navel is your Star  
Within it quench your hot cigar,  
And cool such thoughts, although you char  
Your skin.

## The Family Vault

'COUSINS, make room: I had grown restless there  
Under the plough with foreign corn to bear:  
And so I tunnelled, though the mud was thick,  
Homewards (from my own worms I learned the trick)—  
Hope on high gear can take the steepest hill  
And patience through the solid rock can drill.  
Roots were my hanging-straps, warrens my track,  
I swam or waded where the mud was slack  
And took the Underground full speed for home,  
A record-breaking Malcolm of the loam.  
Hitched to my vertebræ, a rattling train,  
I stoked the rushing engine of my brain  
With coals of thought, huge nuggets of desire,  
While fierce imaginations fed the fire,  
Matched with whose speed the Flying Scot must fail,  
A spavined Rozinante of the rail,  
To rot with dinosaurs and other blind  
Unwieldy locos that we've left behind,  
For here's the Terminus, the Final Halt:  
But few can enter into this calm vault'—  
So a dead poet to his kinsmen cried,  
Then to some would-be gate-crashers outside:—  
'This "future", here, is only what *remains*,

You can't come here on tricycles or trains:  
Puff how you will you cannot fetch it near,  
There's no accelerator in a year:  
No "seasons" to this station can be booked,  
No office here for parcels overlooked:  
No "Ladies" here or "Gentlemens" are seen  
For most of you to hesitate between,  
No little Arthurs come here on the spree,  
No "specials" steaming to the Jamboree,  
No room is here for lolly-boys or louts  
No flying kites on Sundays for the Scouts:  
All here are in the Past and were before  
They ever entered by this ghostly door:  
All here are in the present, and will be  
When past is all the future you foresee.  
You cannot crash a puff-puff through this wall—  
But with a noisy picnic least of all;  
You come in single, if you come at all.  
Balloons and aeroplanes make here no storm,  
You can't get in save in a human form,  
Save in a human form, a human sprite—  
You get in here by standing bolt-upright!  
No stratosphere could raise you to that height,  
Nor all your rage of horizontal flight.  
For some who fill the present with their strength

And raise in height what you spin out in length  
This swell compartment was reserved: I say  
We do not travel here, we only stay:  
You cannot get here, travel how you may.  
Try it by river, buoyed on Bergson flux—  
It's even far too wet for fish or ducks:  
Try it by walking, wheeling your own prams—  
But if you sent yourself by telegrams,  
Registered post, or T.S.F., or parcel,  
Or shot yourself from out Big Bertha's arseh'le,  
There is no post-address at which to leave you,  
Nor any kind old Uncle to receive you—  
Try as you can, strap-hang with all your might,  
Sing the same war-song as with buns you fight  
Still on your strenuous journey sitting tight  
Counting each whizzing post, typewritten tree  
As progress in the simple A.B.C.  
Of little Arthur's tick-tock history,  
Subjecting still What-Is to What-May-Come  
By whizzing down your railway on your bum.  
As novelty discovering the stuff  
That was stale meat to Thomson and to Clough  
Who take the train and whistle with the wind  
As if they longed to leave themselves behind  
And hoped to bring some other self in sight

Though that in turn should prove as strange a fright!  
Your modernism is so old and hoar  
All history has groaned with it of yore,  
When Malherbe ruled the literary waves  
Consigning all the Pleiad to the graves,  
And swarms of Wallers hid the face of Donne  
For centuries, as locusts hide the sun.  
As for machines and verse, would you deposit  
Your Manley Hopkins on the Water-Closet?  
Did Byron straddle in on Arkwright's Loom,  
Or Blake with Davy's Lamp this vault illumine?  
They came as separate men: rather they grew here,  
None of them peddled, bath-chaired, hiked, or flew here.  
Dead or alive they keep their height and place  
Whose ticket was the human form and face:  
They do not need to train to where they *are*,  
Whose tick-tock is the white meridian Star  
That sings them different things to what you hear  
When Uncle holds his tick-tock to your ear;  
Turns a wheel other than the birthday model  
That, with its wheels seems to have turned your noddle,  
Hangs in the sky, you'll see if you grow tall,  
And shines, and shines—and doesn't puff at all.  
Forward you progress on the ringing track  
But always to the engine turn your back,

Clinging to youth: and when to cling you can't,  
Castrate your coming manhood, be an aunt—  
“Fulfil your promise,” here's a pair of shears  
For it is up to you at thirty years—  
Dole out the buns to all the younger crew  
As Uncle Walpole hands them out to you.  
Inhabiting the future as you claim  
You dun us for obedience in its name,  
And though you stalk in rags, you seem to swank,  
In some Swiss Navy, of exalted rank,  
Or riches in some unknown foreign bank  
Where, if you are not overdrawn or blank,  
Why not go home and revel in your riches  
And buy yourself a decent pair of breeches?  
Since that's your native country, why not stay there,  
Why lag behind to boast you know the way there?  
Here in this vault we're rooted in the Past  
Of many “futures” none of which can last,  
Save as it grows to that immortal Rock.  
We do not make appointments with the clock,  
But rooted in the Past from which we came  
Live in the moment as the light in flame.

If God had meant you all to act together  
He would have bound you in one hide of leather

And formed two boots like gun-boats huge and stout  
And mainsail shorts to clothe that mighty Scout;  
His scouting-pole should be a Tamarack  
Able the dome of Parthenon to crack;  
And I should not be gasconading here  
But hiding somewhere farther in the rear:  
But as you are, I come and sit nearby  
Not knowing if to chuckle or to cry,  
For joined in one, the creature you produce  
Is neither fit for ornament nor use.

Let us arrange our books upon the shelves,  
The age is mania, you forswear yourselves.  
Your mania is too general to see,  
And that is why you throw half-bricks at me.  
We each have films in which we love to star  
And kid ourselves we're others than we are:  
Between yourselves your folly you connive at  
Since yours is general as mine is private.  
Some in the future, others in the past  
Try to escape from their own selves at last,  
They change their periods, forswear their time,  
And on sincerity they blame the crime.  
For all, it seems, were hypocrites before  
Their natures they so honestly forswore,

Ere men aspired to play the girlish wile  
And women to the manhood they revile;  
And finding life too bristly for the sense  
Can only dare approach it through pretence—  
Sincere pretence, of course, the true-blue stuff,  
Without the least hypocrisy of bluff.  
So when the word Hypocrisy you say  
You hold your nose and point the other way.

Wind hurries, but the sun is paced and slow  
And they must walk who farthest have to go:  
Slow be my thinking, without dates to keep,  
Slow as a diver seven fathoms deep  
Or as Lalanda seems to move in sleep.  
It's time for speaking quietly and plain  
When other folk are sprinting for the train.  
And naturally—as a rose can blow  
Red, red against the pure Nevadan snow.  
Let Spender over wowser-problems fret  
And sentimentalize the fragrant Pet—  
Hear how it whistles “jug, puff-puff, tereu”  
Better than any nightingale could do,  
Smell it, my lad: if you want rarer treats—  
The fragrant leather of those third class seats.  
They never see a train or a steam-boat

But seem to get a tightening of the throat,  
They never see a junk petarding coal  
But get a sort of shiver in the soul.  
Why should men sentimentalize their queens  
When they can be platonic with machines?  
Let's epicure in proper wowser style—  
Counting how many minutes to the mile  
Until our minds by engine-greasing grow  
As stubbed and grimy as a workman's toe!

## To Mary

WHEN the anopheles were blithe  
And life with fever played the whore,  
And death was plying at his scythe  
Like a great oarsman at his oar:—

And all along that fearful trip  
That seemed the vengeance of the past,  
I saw the world, a sinking ship,  
As from the summit of its mast,—

Ding-donging in the lunar steeple  
Of madness, with a wound to nurse,  
For food and drink I asked the people  
But all they gave me was a curse.

Then when we strays were roped and branded  
(A burning cross upon the breast)  
And in the great Corral were landed  
Survivors of the rinderpest,—

Blood squirted from my index knuckle  
With that tremendous surge I had  
My life to right, my belt to buckle,  
And stand up glorious and glad.

You led me to the feet of Christ,  
Who threatened me with lifted quirt—  
But by its loving fury sliced  
I staggered upright from the dirt.

And that is why I cannot simper  
Nor sigh, nor whine in my harangue—  
Instead of ending with a whimper  
My life will finish with a bang!

You are the valiant, lovely, kind,  
And, till there came this Break of Day,  
Were the horizon, stars, and wind,  
And flowery pampa where I lay.

## Whatever Comes

NEED, when beset by hunger in the waste,  
For food or friendship takes whatever comes.  
The Tartars scorning kitchens in their haste  
Could cook their food on horseback with their bum s.  
As beggars pool their botches by the way—  
The lame upon the eyeless blinkers ride:  
Or drunkards (herding phantom sheep that stray)  
Who help each other on—from side to side!  
Or if as wrecked survivors on a raft  
Pecksniff with Bobadil were cast abaft,  
To share provisions—one his good advice  
And one his oaths and last remaining lice . . .  
Instead of feeling sore you could have laughed  
At your mistake, and let the truth suffice.

## Herdsman's Song

FILL high the holy Cup  
That Christ has bled to crown,  
Against the sunrise hold it up  
And, empty, hurl it down!  
Life is a girl superbly built  
And kicking in your hold—  
But plunge your dagger to the hilt  
If ever she grows cold!  
Through endless mornings of adventure  
Follow still the dawn:  
Our blood has something of the Centaur  
And something of the Faun.  
With acts and joyous strife  
Combine the dream;  
Each of us has, in Life,  
His Arles or Nîmes.  
By the grim Sphinx with rosy wing  
The turtle flies;  
For every mile our horses spring  
Some sorrow dies.  
Round our knees is their snorted breath  
And the blue above,  
And we ride to the Queen of Death  
By the road of love.

## A Good Resolution

ENOUGH of those who study the oblique,  
Inverted archæologists, who seek  
The New, as if it were some quaint antique—

Nomads of Time, and pungent with its must,  
Who took the latest crinolines on trust  
As wigwams for their vagrant wanderlust;—

Of jargons that a fuddled Celt will mix  
By the blue light of methylated wicks,  
Fishing dead words like kippers from the Styx;—

Sham Brownings, too, who'll cloud a shallow stream,  
Or in a haystack hide a needle theme  
Till platitudes like propositions seem—

With *pontes asinorum* bridging ditches  
That, fully-armed, without the aid of witches,  
Old knights could hurdle in their cast-iron breeches.

Hide poverty beneath a chequered shirt  
And trust from common eyesight to divert  
The jagged ribs that currugate the dirt.

I will go stark: and let my meanings show  
Clear as a milk-white feather in a crow  
Or a black stallion on a field of snow.

## ‘Creeping Jesus’

PALE crafty eyes beneath his ginger crop,  
A fox's snout with spectacles on top—  
Eye to the keyhole, kneeling on the stair,  
We often found this latter saint at prayer,  
‘For your own sake,’ he'd tell you with a sigh  
(He always did his kindness on the sly).  
He paid mere friendship with his good advice  
And swarmed with counsels as a cur with lice:  
For his friends' actions, with unerring snout,  
He always foxed his own low motives out,  
And having found them, trot them out to view,  
Saying it hurt him so much more than you!  
Sober, astute, and modest in his mien,  
Between extremes he always chose the *mean*,  
For Epsom mounted quickly to his head  
And he saw brown where other men see red.  
Walking Locarno between friend and friend  
He soured the quarrels he so loved to mend.  
In him the ‘friend’ concealed the jealous ‘tante’  
Who slandered women he could not supplant,  
Whose faults he would invent and then reveal  
On the pretext of trying to conceal.  
He'd blurt a secret (none so sure as he)

By hiding it so hard that all could see.  
He'd make men black in everybody's eye—  
Taking their part, so stoutly to deny  
Things they had never done, nor none suspected . . .  
Until his stout defence was interjected!  
No dun with more reluctance or regret  
Ever came knocking to present a debt,  
Than he so mildly, sadly would reproach  
A friend—or any painful subject broach.  
His martyred look no mortal could resist  
More than a gossamer to Dempsey's fist,  
It had the power to put you in the wrong  
And suck excuses from a rawhide thong.  
When of apologies your heart was poor  
You always seemed to owe him more and more,  
The star of Tartuffe by his own grew dim  
And Pecksniff was a nincompoop to him!  
He was the guy to censure or expunge  
The folk on whom he'd condescend to sponge,  
And when he ate you out of hearth and home,  
On independence lecture you a tome.  
A counter-jumper born of base degree  
In all the world no greater snob than he,  
Though he descended from some anglo-parson  
Who had committed [something else than] arson,

And looked it—had you made his collar shunt  
To tally with its owner, *back-to-front*!  
So satisfied his smirk, so smug his snigger,  
You'd take him for a deacon or a vicar;  
His pale blue smile was full of deany dope  
And in his hand a cake of Monkey Soap.  
If we put up with him—'twas as a bug  
In his own talent (an expensive rug),  
But he abused its lovely silken floss,  
One tiny insect spoiled the whole kaross:  
The leather's perished, moulted all the hair,  
But the old bug is still established there!

## The Guid Auld Mon

THE yark is yiddering in the Yon—  
The guid man's breeks are hung to dry;  
Hoots awa! you guid auld mon . . .  
Breeches? 'Naw!' But jacket? 'Ay!'

His old farm-hens are swiping worms,  
But that guid bloke, he's like to die.  
Breeches?—'Naw!' With cold he squirms . . .  
Even his kilts are hung to dry!

He warms himself by smoking faggis—  
Meanwhile pathetic hands he waggis—  
Breeches? *No!* But native haggis,  
The dirty tripes of Lowland sheep!

He kids the Saxons with his cracks,  
His guid false teeth have bitten deep;  
Dictionaries have thicker backs  
While the puir Musies watch and weep.

You good old Mon, it's time to die  
And I'm the priest your corpse to bless!  
And if you're resurrected—Why!—  
Jacket? *No!* But trousers? YES!

## The Pommitos

OF the dead bones  
Accepting the rot,  
And cursing us others for  
Not:—  
For standing up straight  
In spite of the weight  
And not lying down before  
Shot.  
Since standing or lying,  
Swimming or flying,  
May come to the same in the  
End:—  
*Much* it must matter  
If, straighter or flatter,  
We stand, or we wallow, or  
Bend!

## Born too Late

THE Born-too-Late and Born-too-Soon  
Are Babies howling for the Moon.  
For me the Wherest and the Howest  
Is still the Herest and the Nowest—  
And By and By are far too soon!

## The Argonauts

WE were the strivers to disprove  
That it was ever anywhere but here  
Or any time but now.

We pointed the blunt iron of the rocks,  
Kicked it with strong propellers from behind,  
And set upon the bows  
A roaring megaphone whose giant funnel  
Sucked in the distances before  
And out behind discharged them to the waves  
Backfiring from resounding tubes of brass.

We saw the wise men of the world  
Like slim gesticulating trees  
Recede upon the disappearing headlands,  
Shot away into the past,  
The projectiles of our vision,  
Down the barrels of our telescopes,  
The period-peashooting  
Guns of time.

The island with its periscope of palm,  
The numbered waves, careering trees,  
And clouds typewritten on the sight,

Forming wild words in the swift rhetoric  
Of motion, wrote our daily bulletin,  
And said, re-read,  
That it was never anywhere but here,  
Nor when, but now.

Chase, let the silver helix of the noon,  
Whang your ellipse from east to west—  
This little ark, this telegram of steel  
Arrives the minute it was sent, or let us say  
An hour before—  
But January, speed,  
Goes in as it came out by the same door.

## To the Red Indian, Michawago

*'And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering'*

BROTHER, our race was withered quite away.  
Father! our race is coming, and to stay—  
With Four Great Horsemen clearing up the way.

We, that were scarce, are many now, and strong.  
Charlie, the son of Cain, has reigned too long,  
His great black feet are fastened with a thong.

The patriot and communist are stout  
For love to knock their neighbours inside-out—  
All Charlies love their comrades—with a clout!

The world-made-safe-for-Charlies is no more,  
For human blood humanitarians roar,  
Strap off their guns, and shuffle off to war.

Should we be forced, in their front trench we'll fight,  
Then come back to our poetry at night.  
The friends of danger are the sons of light!

When sheep are angry, panthers well may leap—  
The food God gave us was among the sheep,  
But many rams had butted me to sleep.

The bluejay wind, the oriole of light  
Perch on our shoulders now. God's Egret White  
Sits on the Bull of valour and delight—

Our Bull, the World! (and b—! to its affairs)  
Whose horns the moon is, the sunbeams his hairs—  
And ours the red veronica that dares!

We'll torry him with our bug-eaten shirts  
Without complaining of our wrongs and hurts,  
The broken pelvis, or the wound that squirts.

Let Charlie whine, the more he feels his loss—  
Since first our red Torero took the toss  
Sky-high upon the black horns of the Cross.

But to our Happy Hunting Grounds we'll fly  
To bring His solar kingdom from the sky—  
On us that Great White Spirit keeps his eye!

'Hike, Charlie, hike!' my native bluejay screams,  
'Along the sky a White Commando streams  
Let by la Mancha's knight—the prince of dreams!

Hike, Charlie! for you long to live no more!  
Run, Charlie! for your Train has gone before;  
And Four Great Horsemen canter on your spoor!

This Bull by which we call each other 'friend'  
Shall link us round the earth from end to end  
Wherever out of Abel we descend.

Pampas will tremble with our mighty herd,  
Air with our hymns—and all our prayers be heard,  
That day when Charlie gives himself the Bird.

In that Rodeo, we shall meet our peers,  
The Angels will come down on bucking steers,  
And Abel's sons will cut the Devil's ears.

Let Charlies whine; the world with them is full,  
Hungry for death, they still refuse to pull.  
We'll finish with the Mustang and the Bull!

To all Fascists and Communists from a Vaquero

If you would lepidopterize  
These mariposas that I fling,  
Then let the blind up on red skies  
Where those great aeroplanes take wing—  
And hear your gay gun-hornets sing:  
'Hosannah to the Prince of Flies!  
The Bluebottle shall be the king  
Wherever halls or hovels rise,  
When reeking charnels scent the skies  
And droning hurricanes of flies  
Take over from the race of Cain,  
The day when Four Big Horsemen ride  
And Charlies dig themselves inside—  
When Four Big Horsemen clear the way,  
Restoring to the Sons of Day  
The Hill, the Pampa, and the Tide.'

## To a Pommie Critic

I CANNOT 'voice' your hesitations  
Your difficulties or your doubt?—  
The rictus of your affectations  
Would sprain my jaw and knock me out!  
I see the obvious ten leagues off,  
The lighthouse of my little theme;  
It does not make me sneer or cough  
That things resemble what they seem—  
Philosophy? He is an ass  
Who tries to fish in such a stream;  
I skim the mirror of its cream  
When beauty simpers in the glass;  
I take whatever comes to pass  
Though it should happen in a dream.

## X. Y. Z.

BE shut, as tetanous as clams,  
To wonder and delight;  
Wait for your smug progressive trams  
From morning sun till night:—

Suspect your vision, and begin  
Always in fear or doubt,  
And rather than be taken in  
Be bloody-well kicked out!

Some dryad of the Aspidistras  
Select, to soothe your pain:  
Let [Teacher] guide you to your mistress  
And Sigmund pull the chain!

Only that Beauty shall be mine  
That never slacks the strain—  
A fighting salmon on the line,  
A snorter at the rein!

For Beauty is Bucephalus  
And for nine times we're hurled,  
The tenth may come, confirming us  
The riders of the world!

When did I ever curse my horse  
To hurl me to the ground?  
He stays beside me in his course  
When he has got me downed!

And Beauty is a fighting steer  
Better by whom be thrown  
Than throng safe galleries to sneer  
At better men knocked down.

When passing through the land of Wowzers  
(They say it was a sin!)  
I pulled 'Orlando' from his trousers  
Like Marsyas from his skin;—

Give me my pardon, Mighty God!  
I did not think of them—  
And why I galloped on their sod  
Was to redeem a gem.

The 'Nordic' son of Palestine  
Has [circumcised] in vain:  
Saxon and Jew!—for me and mine  
The palm, the olive, and the vine,  
The pampa and the plain!

## Law

*An example of how the Charlie libel law can leave a poem*

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I am your Meleager. What is more  
Was born to hunt the Caledonian bore!

## A Schoolmaster

A POMPous rigmarole he takes for *Life*,  
Correcting exercises, caning bums.  
He took the blackboard Death to be his wife  
And left a brood of sodomites and sums!

## The 'Aficionado'

THE bulls recovered from the frost and dew—  
And now the grass is springing rich and new.  
High clouds go sailing in a sky of Thunder  
Laughing like Hell. And it's no bloody wonder—  
(The way Belmonte kidded on the Jew!)

## The Bonxie

*'A fig for those by law protected!'*—BURNS

I've often seen the boasting seagull fly—  
He'd cheat the smallest sparrow for his fig.  
But when the long, spread eagle takes the sky,  
He'll hide behind a Lawyer and a Wig!

## The Prodigal

JOHN Bull, go fatten up your Son  
Against my passing by,  
And Jackie Calf! be underdone  
Whether you roast or fry;  
I'll take my time of Day from none—  
Go carefully, say I!

When clocks like whirling windmills turn  
And scarcely pause to chime  
Like fast propellers at the stern  
Of disappearing Time,  
Then Time's to squander, Time's to burn,  
And Leisure is no crime.

You've slung the World upon a cord  
Your pendulum of rock;  
Its every beat though you record,  
I care no tick nor tock—  
The Pen is mightier than the Sword,  
But slower than the Clock.

Amphitryon may toot his horn  
And puff-puff run to date,  
But leisure was my cash and corn

Who've loitered in my gait,  
Nor died of hurry, nor was born  
Through fear of being late.

## To the Springboks in England, 1932

REMEMBER all our sacred things!  
But first the Sun, our absent Sire,  
Who built you bodies out of fire,  
And tempered them in frosty springs;  
Be like our native plough that drives  
Its red ravines, like lanes of blood,  
Through heaving waves of turf and mud;  
And in this game, as in your lives,  
The far horizon be your tryline—  
A Globe of Fire upon the skyline  
Shall be the only ball you see then,  
That rolled amongst their limping pack,  
Like Bruce's heart amongst the Heathen,  
Hurls on your hurricane attack.

## San Anton's Day

*To my Horse*

'MORO,' you'll be the beauty of this plain  
Whereon the whole world's loveliness is slain  
Like a smashed rose under each sunset sky  
That for its perfume cannot fade or die!  
Under Saint Anthony, pray here with me,  
Pray for us men, and all we are to be,  
Down on the veld beside me on your knee.  
But pray for them that are not straight or plain  
Through the mixed tunnels of whose angry brain  
Creeps the slow scolopendra of the Train!

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## To my Daughters in the Bullring

*Toledo, March, 1936*

ROUND! Whirl that stupid firmament of faces,  
Rearing your steeds like breakers on the sand.  
Then back again return, with lovely paces  
Waltzing your horses softly to the band.  
The Christian people come from many places  
But the Arena was their native land—  
Soaked with our blood by every tyrant's hand.

## To 'the Future'

You all-propitious season,  
Older than Adam's race—  
With what foresight and reason  
You shame to show your face!

## To My Horses

I'VE seen from you far more than from a train;  
—Smug England, stingy France, and bloody Spain,  
But may I die the day I draw the rein!

## A Bouquet for my Wife

BUCK-JUMPED and round the ten horizons hurled  
I've kept the selfsame saddle and this quirt.  
Strip me of all (and welcome all the world)  
Except my wife, my trousers, and my shirt.

## A Fable for my Children

THE Wolf was furious: he had the rabies:  
Children and sheep, he got them every time:  
His favourite *ragoût* was little babies—  
Until St. Francis went to stop the crime.  
'Wolf! Little brother wolf, your tricks are idle,'  
Said that great Prince. 'But what have I to eat?  
I'll not refuse a saddle or a bridle  
But here I am—the world denies me meat.'  
'Come to the monastery,' says St. Francis,  
'There you can feast until your dying day.'  
'O.K.!' says Lobo; like a dog he dances,  
And wags his tail, and follows him away.

No poodle than that wolf was ever better,  
They gave him all the garbage in the street.  
Wolf, model Wolf! You'd think he was a setter!  
Into his belly people slid the meat.  
He played with children and he begged for buns—  
Until St. Francis got an urgent letter  
And had to race a journey with the suns.

Where's brother Wolf? He's nowhere to be found—  
Search in the steeple, search him underground!  
He's back on the sierra killing sheep,

The children cannot play, nor farmers sleep.  
The Prince came back. 'My little brother Lobo!  
You left us and again became a hobo:  
Why?'—'You, my holy Prince, should know too well,  
You brought me from a mountain to a Hell:  
They hint, they lie, suspect—it made me weep,  
I run upon all fours, but cannot creep!  
Forgive me, Prince of God.' That's what he said.  
And the great Prince began to scratch his head;  
He signed the Cross over that Lobo's hair  
And went away reciting our Lord's prayer—  
GIVE US OUR DAILY BREAD

## Pillion to Talavera

### *To a British Hiker*

JUMP up behind, you fine pink pommie!  
And profit by this trotting mule:  
You've stolen my appearance from me  
And made me look an equal fool.

You buy dark specs to stare at castles,  
But I collect such eye-wear free—  
They deal it out to me in parcels  
Those shock-troops are so fond of me!

My! It must be a lovely sight  
To stare at mountains through such mists:  
But I am equal to your sleight—  
Policemen were my oculists.

I have to keep my goggles still  
And see the world more blue than rose:  
But you un-saddle yours at will  
That play the jockey to your nose.

This virgin light without a fleck  
You will not take it with your eyes,

And so you've got it round your neck—  
The crimson of Castilian skies.

Yet could I trudge in sawn-off trousers,  
And redden up like logs at Yule,  
Between a Springbok and you Wowzers  
What difference—except this mule!

I love you just like an Italian  
When you put on those sanctions first.  
—Tell them that my mule's a stallion  
When you get back to Sissyhurst!

# Procession to the Sun

## *Sunflower Harvest*

*For the guitar and for 'Bill' Sykes*

BETWEEN the brown sierras  
The sunflower-laden mules  
Bring in the grey mosaics  
So lately frilled with fire:—

The fog-horn of the factory  
Then all the lifted steeples  
Ring out in distant thunder  
The victory of noon.

The firing ceases at the butts:  
And soldiers, cleaning rifles,  
Run out to ask the horsemen—  
And always for a song.

The workers from the factory  
Streaming back to town,  
They stop and ask the riders—  
And always for a tune!

The porters at the bridges,  
The whores along the bank—

And all the whoreshops empty  
To see the boys go by.

You ask me for the roses, girl,  
I've got behind my ears;  
But what they'd whisper in your own  
Is danger to your creed.

You're asking for our sunshine,  
Our comradeship and peace,  
To step upon the serpent  
As Eve had done for me;—

Strength in the family,  
Friendship on the farm—  
You beg it in these roses?  
You beg me half my life!

You're asking *life* and danger,  
To beg a rose or song:  
Safer to leave us, little girl,  
And let us get along.

I hear Alfonso singing  
(Oh, what a lovely voice!)  
Silver in the saddle-bags,  
And on the counter—Ping!

You go off to the 'Mitin'  
And take off your complaint  
To the Señora Nelken:  
This rose is for my Saint!

The sun goes on before us,  
Our mules are fat as priests,  
If any horse can beat my own  
Find it in the land!

I hear Alfonso calling,  
Calling me to go,  
(‘Chinkle, Chinkle!’) so he cries—  
Because he loves me so!

You'll hear our song one day, you Charlies,  
But we don't unsling guitars  
For anyone who parleys  
Unless it's with the stars.

Thank you very much

*Driving cattle to Casas Buenas*

THE roller perched upon the wire  
(Telegrams running through his toes)  
At my advance would not retire  
But shouted 'Campbell' as he rose,  
A Telegraph of solar fire.  
Girth-high, the poppies and the daisies  
To brush the belly of my mule,  
The thyme was smoking up God's praises,  
The sun was hot, the wind was cool.  
The white sierra was the icy  
Refrigerator of that noon:  
And in that air so warm and spicy,  
So blue, so pale, Toledo's June,  
The sun, a cork upon its high sea,  
Seemed not much bigger than the moon.  
Wading through seas of fire and blood  
(I never saw such flowers before!)  
I said to Apis 'What a cud  
To make the Bulls of Bashan roar!'  
The church with storks upon the steeple—  
And scarcely could my cross be signed,  
When round me came those Christian people,

So hospitable, clean, and kind.  
Beans and alfalfa in the manger  
(Alfalfa?—there was never such!)  
And rice and rabbit for the stranger—  
Thank you very much!

## The Cowboy's Knife

*Translated from the Spanish of the same author*

In a world of stamped paper  
Where bolshies the emperors are,  
To prance and to caper  
To sing and to play the guitar!  
We must pay very dear  
For our riotous lives,  
But the way we shall clear  
At the points of our knives.  
Neither bolshies nor Guards  
Can stand a good cowboy;  
But beaten with rifles  
And pestered with trifles—  
Here's the way how, boy,  
For you wouldn't believe  
That this little sleeve  
Is not full of cards!  
When they need no more meat  
But can live upon wheat  
And the gum they can lick off their stamps  
We will get off our saddles  
The way Charlie waddles  
And all become tramps.

But it seems like a ghost, man!  
How their 'future' appears—  
That there will be postmen,  
And bloody schoolmasters  
And other disasters,  
With pommie-pink ears,  
Trying to round up our steers!

## Testament of a Vaquero

HERDING his cattle on the dusty flat,  
A cowboy whose guitar had lost its tone,  
With the grey moonlight leaking through his hat,  
Thus, on his ancient gelding as he sat,  
From hungry guts ventriloquized alone—  
'At Oxford if I hadn't proved a fool  
(What tragedies my happy fate forbids!)  
I'd be a Charlie sitting on a stool  
And teaching mathematics to the kids.  
My old professor in a thousand shifts,  
My early friend, perhaps the last I'll know,  
I thank my Poverty for all my gifts  
Who shares with me his coat of wind and snow.  
All else I can bequeath to who requires—  
To those who lack the true poetic fires  
I leave the fine nystagmus of my eye  
To lead them round the world in frantic gyres,  
And land them in a garret or a sty;  
That he for whom the fatted calf was fed,  
So late returning homeward for the spree,  
Shall find a full-grown toro in his stead  
And thank his fortune for the nearest tree.  
But I will hoard away my lack of gear—

The world my sun-baked spud, my stove the day!  
And if at times its rind be charred and tough  
Keen hunger is the knife that cuts the way—  
There's death in surfeit, dullness in "Enough".  
To the anatomists—my twisted spine—  
Diploma of equestrian despute;  
But to their patients half my Crusoe sleight  
Of fishing out the cargo from the wreck;  
And this light heart—to raft them to the calm  
Green island with its periscope of palm,  
And my Good Luck to Admiral the deck!  
To those who dream of roses and of lilies—  
(Earnest of faith) these breeches I got rent  
When breaking in the pride of English fillies  
(My warhorse still) and punching cows in Kent.  
And to my children, all that I would save,  
When empires crash and red battalions form,  
The Celtic blood so buoyant to the storm,  
That gay joy-riding foam of every wave!

## Vaquero's Hearth

THE slow fire drowsing on the sticks—  
Time dies:  
The flame's blue serpent tongue that flicks  
Our eyes  
Is knowledge. Lovely, we have trodden  
That serpent—it is dead.  
From Death and Danger we have gotten  
Our wine and bread.  
Let all the world go loco too,  
A pot where heathens go to spew,  
But we'll remain,  
Still to our Solar Saviour true  
And to the pampa and the plain.  
I love to hear those bulls outside  
Roaring with the wind,  
While the house shakes, and thunders ride—  
That are not patent-marked nor tinned!  
Calm, calm, this lovely sister, Life,  
That sits beside us now:  
Though scarred and tortured in the strife,  
Magnificent her brow!  
As lovely as yourself, my wife,  
And always Here and Now!

## NOTES

# NOTES

## MITHRAIC EMBLEMS

IV. The seven colours of the rainbow when painted on a swiftly revolving disc combine to form the purest whiteness.

XXI. *Kaross*: A rug made of fur or of the fleeces of antelopes, otters, or leopards.

## TO THE SURVIVORS

*Trident of Cailar*: The trident of the Camargue cowboys.

## FAITH

The cattle-Egret accompanies cowboys and their herds in order to feed on the grasshoppers their passing raises. I myself have had as many as half a dozen sitting on me and my horse. Throughout this book I use the Egret as the symbol of Faith.

## RUST

*Voet-ganger*: Newly-hatched locust—'Foot-goer'.

## DEDICATION TO MARY CAMPBELL

*Atila*: A Roman historian recounts that the Huns often used their meat as a saddle, thus making it more tender and obviating the necessity of cooking it, in order to save time.

## PROLOGUE

See note to FAITH.

## THE GUID AULD MON

*Tark*: A kind of Scotchman.

*Tiddering*: Eating chick-peas with the left hand—an old Scotch custom.

*Yon*: A hole in the ground.

## TO THE RED INDIAN, MICHAWAGO

The Bluejay referred to is the lilac-breasted Roller, which we call a jay at home.

*Cut the Devil's Ears:* 'Cortar las Orejas'—the honour given to a good matador.

## THE BONXIE

*Bonxie:* Scotch for the Skua gull.

## SAN ANTON'S DAY

The day of the blessing of the Horses. Toledo, 1936.

## PROCESSION TO THE SUN

The Duro and the Peseta (Spanish coins) exhibit a portrait of King Alfonso.

*Mitin:* Meeting.

*Señora Nelken:* A Jewess of great influence in Spanish politics.

*Saint:* Ignatius of Spain.

*Horse:* I call him Moro, and have given him to my daughter, Teresa, for riding so valiantly in the bull-ring. Would Bertrand Russell like to swap with one of his children's donkeys?

## TO MY JOCKEY

*Black Bastards:* Guardias de Asalto.

*Saint Sarah:* The Gypsy Saint of Saintes Maries at the mouth of the Rhône.

The reason why the author was able to bury the gypsy was that the total amnesty, telegraphed two hours after his arrest, freed him.

